DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 080 104 JC 730 179

AUTHOR	Jordan, Richard L.
TITLE	Oakton Community College Curriculum Report.
INSTITUTION	Oakton Community Coll., Morton Grove, Ill.
PUB DATE	17 Jul 73
NOTE	33p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	College Curriculum; *Community Colleges; Courses; *Curriculum; Curriculum Design; *Curriculum Development; Post Secondary Education; Program Descriptions

ABSTRACT

In curriculum development at Oakton Community College, a number of factors are considered for each type of curriculum. For baccalaureate curricula, transferability, completeness, enrollment, relevance and cost are considered. For career curricula, the following are considered: community, State and National need and acceptance; available jobs, pay; enrollment, charge-backs; Cooperation with other colleges; approval of certain State agencies; approval of national accrediting association; and cost. For general studies, student need, enrollment and cost are considered. Various offices, committees, individuals and outside agencies are involved in curriculum design, supervision, implementation, and evaluation. During the next few years curriculum development will be limited somewhat by space problems and the nationwide drop in college enrollments. Probably no new curricula will be developed in the baccalaureate area. Special interest programs for students will be implemented from time to time. An Election '74 program is now under development. Courses as extensions of existing curricula will be added from time to time, and some new disciplines, such as astronomy, may be added. The thrust in curriculum development during the next five years will be in career education. (KM)

ED 080104

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN
ATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRE
SENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

OAKTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

CURRICULUM REPORT

Presented to the Board of Trustees

by

Richard L. Jordan

Dean of Instruction

July 17, 1973

JC 730 179

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

INTRODUCTION

This report is intended as a description of the various aspects of curriculum design and development at Oakton. It does not set or propose policy. It does detail practices within the framework of state law and guidelines, Board policy, and internal administrative and faculty practices.

The review is divided into four parts: an overview of curriculum including some definitions; a description of the role of various people, committees, and agencies in curricular matters and evaluation; a section on where we are now (1973-74); and finally some consideration of where and why we're going and how we're going to get there.

OVERVIEW

Broadly speaking, curriculum is what we teach. It is the primary reason for our existence, the main source of our income, the center of most college activity. Since opening in the fall of 1970, we have followed guidelines, some legal, some philosophical in an effort to develop a comprehensive set of curriculum offerings.

Philosophically we opted for a wide range of choices for students in the areas of curriculum, program, and course. Since definitions are necessary for understanding, those terms are defined as follows:

1. Curriculum -- a combination of a number of courses (some specified, some elective) successful completion of which results in a diploma or an associate degree. Examples would be liberal arts, general studies, secretarial science, or physical therapy. If the student completes a specific curriculum, he receives a diploma (approximately 30 hours) or a degree (A.A. for baccalaureate curricula, A.A.S. for vocational or career curricula). In 1973-74 we are offering one curriculum in general studies, four in baccalaureate, and 28 in career areas.
2. Program -- a special "package" of courses within or across a curriculum or curricula. This package is usually taken during a specific semester and in interdisciplinary in nature. Emphasis is on individualized instruction and independent study. Examples are the Semester for Self-Directed Study, Focus: Chicago, and the Green Turnip Survival Program.
3. Course -- the smallest unit of study available. Typically offering graduation credit of from one to five hours, a course lasts one semester and includes specific subject matter described in the college catalog.

Examples are Communications 101, Radiologic Technology 131, or Chemistry 211.

4. Section -- a specific course offering in a given semester. There may be one section of communications 101, or there may be twenty meeting at different times on different days. Communications 101, section 01 might be at 8:30-9:20 AM on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

Our initial (1970) curriculum choices were based on a community attitude survey taken before the college opened, a standard set of college parallel courses (mathematics, history, biology, etc.) and developmental or remedial courses for those students not fully prepared for college work. At that time our constraints were the limited number of students we were prepared to admit our first year (approx. 500 F.T.E.) and the brief time available between May and September. Even then our course and curricular offerings were diverse and complete enough that, taking into account the multitude of adult non-credit courses offered in high school districts 207 and 219, the state certified us as a "comprehensive junior college."

We have sought to provide the district (i.e., our students and potential students) with the professional expertise necessary to develop sound curricula composed of quality programs and courses in sufficient numbers and taught by top quality professionals. The role of specific staff members in curriculum will be discussed in the next section. It remains to be noted here how sections, courses, programs, and curricula are created. These processes are best shown in the flow charts found in appendices 1, 2, and 3. In addition, the role and duties of citizens advisory committees are described in appendices 4 and 5.

Something remains to be said about restraints on curriculum development and about the evaluation of curricula. A school is not like a business, but it is not entirely unlike one, either. Although a college does not exist to make a profit, it strives for quality products, it does have clients, and it must be cognizant of the market. Oakton's products are its students -- graduates, "job outs," completers of courses or programs. Follow-up studies on graduates will, of course, increase as we have more graduates (see appendix 7 for some information), but there is some reliable data now. For example,over the past three years, 93% of our students completing the Licensed Practical Nursing Program have passed their state board examinations. In our continuing positive approach to curriculum development we are always looking closely at the following constraints:

I. Baccalaureate Curricula
   - A. Transferability
   - B. Completeness
   - C. Enrollment
   - D. Relevance
   - E. Cost

II. Career Curricula
   - A. Community, state, and national need and acceptance
   - B. Available jobs; pay
   - C. Enrollment; charge-backs
   - D. Cooperation with other colleges
   - E. Approval of state agencies other than IJCB, IBHE, and D.V.T.E. (e.g., Department of Registration and Education)

F. Approval of National Accrediting Association
(e.g., Council on Medical Education -A.M.A.)

G. Cost

III. General Studies

A. Student need

B. Enrollment

C. Cost

There is limited reason for us to offer a course in the baccalaureate area if it will not "count" toward graduation at a four-year college. We might, however, do this if there was relevance (D., above) and student interest. Usually the senior colleges apply two criteria in their consideration of transferability:

1. Does it fit into a curriculum they offer? (E.g., if they do not have a major in forestry, a forestry course may not transfer.)

2. Is it a first or second year course at the senior college? Organic chemistry is nearly always considered a sophomore or "200 level" course, and thus it transfers. Seventeenth Century Poetry or Political Theory are usually junior or senior level courses, and thus they typically will not transfer.

Senior colleges want students transferring as juniors to have general courses as a rule. They also want the student to have diversity. Courses we teach in a baccalaureate curriculum must provide a complete 60 hour spread of courses with science, social science, and humanities components. We try to offer such courses consistent with the requirements of the four-year schools and the desires of our students.

A specific problem of community colleges in curriculum design is keeping enrollment figures respectable while offering completeness as mentioned above. If a student plans to major in math, one of the sciences, or engineering, he should take mathematics through calculus with us. Such courses, however, have relatively high attrition rates (foreign language is another example). We must be prepared to offer sections of calculus or like advanced courses with small enrollments because we have an obligation to the student to provide him with a complete curriculum once he enters it. Oakton, and most community colleges, offers many courses in series. After course A, the student logically takes course B, and so on. If there are four or more such connected courses, we are especially careful in an attempt to keep the section enrollments at a respectable level (examples, in addition to math and foreign language, are art, music, and chemistry).

Finally we are concerned about relevance and cost. A course must fit into one of our existing curricula as a legitimate first or second year option, and it should be one that students see as germane to their career goals and thus are willing to take. Cost includes such things as capital equipment, instructor's salary, special room requirements, student-teacher ratio, and supplies. All of these factors are considered when we review a new course proposal.

In career curricula we are reasonably required to verify the need for new curricula and to obtain all available information about starting salaries, possibilities for advancement, and job placement. The current tight money at the state level makes it more and more difficult to obtain approval for new curricula. Recent state emphasis on state-wide coordination and concern over duplicated curricula in the same geographical area have forced community colleges to show evidence that joint programs and cooperative agreements are impractical before

approval is given to start a new area-duplicated vocational curriculum. Only recently the State Board of Higher Education approved our Machine Technology (apprenticeship) Curriculum with the stated condition that we cooperate with Triton College in any development or expansion of the curriculum.

A further restraint of career curriculum implementation is the need, in some cases, for a "third party approval." Thus in some health areas (e.g., nursing), not only our own board of trustees and the three state boards (IJCB, IBHE and DVTE) must approve a new curriculum, but also approval recommendation by a health commission (Health Education Commission) and approval of the Department of Registration and Education is required. These agencies can insist on certain conditions, such as lead planning time, a designated student-teacher ratio, etc., before granting approval.

In the next section, I will discuss how new curricula, programs, and courses are instituted and what things we look at in making a decision. It needs to be said here, however, that we receive numerous suggestions about additions. All are considered in the light of our goals, resources, and restraints discussed above. Our primary goal is a sound, basic set of offerings which afford students choices. We do not attempt to "compete" with Harper, Triton, or four-year schools. Our obligation is to the students and taxpayers in Junior College District #535.

ROLES, PROCESS, AND EVALUATION

Various offices, committees, and individuals play a part in curriculum design, supervision, implementation, and evaluation at Oakton. In this section I will describe the various roles and functions performed.

President of the college -- As chief executive officer, the president makes all "inside" decisions about addition or deletion of courses, programs, and curricula. After all preliminary steps are followed it is he who makes the decision and reports to or requests action of the Board of Trustees.

Dean of Instruction -- As chief academic officer of the college, the Dean coordinates and supervises all curricular matters. Along with the Dean of Student Personnel, the Assistant Dean of Instruction for Vocational Programs, and the College Group Chairmen, he hires and evaluates faculty, provides liaison with underlying school districts, senior colleges, business, industry, and the community at large. Simply put, it is the Dean who is accountable to the president for the quality of the instructional program.

Assistant Dean of Instruction for Vocational Programs -- Working out of the Dean's office, she supervises the career program coordinators and the vocational programs we offer. She works with advisory committees, the state and local agencies, and professionals at other community colleges in the creation and conduct of our vocational offerings.

College Group Chairmen (4) -- The group chairmen are line officers supervising the teaching faculty. As members of the College Coordinating Council, they have a role in approval and evaluation of curricular offerings as well as their regular supervisory duties.

Faculty -- Faculty members may recommend new courses or programs. They also sit on committees concerned with setting up and/or evaluating programs.

Students -- Either through their elected student government or as individuals, students may recommend new courses or programs or suggest changes in existing offerings.

Standing committees charged with curricular matters are as follows:

Citizens General and Curricular Advisory Committees -- These groups, described in Appendices 5 and 6, advise the administration as experts in their own fields. Their advice is always sought in creation, implementation of vocational programs. Currently more than 140 citizens serve the college on these committees. These people serve without pay and represent talents more diverse than the college could ever hope to encompass within its professional staff.

District Wide Articulation Committee -- Chaired by the Dean of Instruction, membership is composed of Dean Arns of Oakton, Dr. Myers of High School District #207, Dr. Gilluly of High School District #219, and Mr. Burke of Notre Dame School for Boys. The committee operates as an information sharing and problem solving group. For example, this group is currently discussing concurrent enrollment of high school students at Oakton.

The College Coordinating Council -- Chaired by the Dean of Instruction and comprised of the Deans, Business Manager, and Group Chairmen, this committee makes recommendations directly to the president. All matters concerning curriculum and programs are cleared through and coordinated by the CCC.

Faculty (F.E.C.) Curriculum Committee -- Chaired by a faculty member elected each year to the position, this committee screens each new course recommended for inclusion in the catalog (with the sole exception of groups of courses included in a new vocational curriculum). This is the group that initially recommends

adding or deleting courses. Although it reports to the Faculty Executive Council, action on courses is also reported to the College Coordinating Council which in turn notifies the Curriculum Committee of its intended recommendation to the president.

The Board Curriculum Committee -- This is a committee appointed by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. Administrators, faculty, and students have representatives in the group. The committee acts as a sounding board for school curricular activity and as a channel of communication to the Board as a whole. Its major concerns are long range planning, the economics of curriculum, and evaluation of existing curricula.

Finally, outside agencies play an important part in curriculum at Oakton. Those agencies and their roles are outlined below:

The Illinois Junior College Board (IJCB) -- This agency has legal responsibility to "lead and coordinate" the community colleges of the State of Illinois as set forth in the Master Plan for Higher Education in Illinois (1964) and the Public Junior College Act of 1965. IJCB establishes standards and criteria for the educational programs within community colleges in the state and approves courses and curricula making them eligible for state funding. The professional staff of the Board is empowered to approve new courses which are extensions of existing programs (i.e., curricula); the staff makes recommendations to the Board on new curricula approval. The IJCB cannot dictate to the colleges, but it can effectively exert leadership in determining the direction of curriculum development.

The Board of Higher Education -- This is the major state agency concerned with post-secondary education in Illinois. Its role and importance is best described by quoting from the state guidelines themselves. "The Board of Higher Education has specific responsibility for developing Master Plans for Higher Education in Illinois, approving and periodically reviewing programs of instruction, research and public service, and receiving budget requests for both operations and capital projects of public colleges and universities for each biennium." (Standards and Criteria for the Evaluation and Recognition of Illinois Public Junior Colleges, revised 1970, Page 10) In the last year the Board of Higher Education has taken a more active role than heretofore in junior college program approval. The Board, in fact, held up full approval of our Architectural Technology Program for an entire year.

Division of Vocational and Technical Education -- This state agency works cooperatively with IJCB, but it supervises all vocational education in the state (K-14). DVTE receives an annual One and Five Year Plan from all community colleges. This report serves as our major planning document for vocational education. DVTE also controls state funding for capital equipment in career programs, and reimburses vocational instruction at a specified rate per credit hour per student.

The entire curriculum process is not complete without evaluation. We are continuously seeking to improve existing units of instruction, assess new ones, and weed out obsolete, unnecessary, or excessively costly ones. Before the Fall 1973 semester begins, we expect to hire a Director of Instructional Research and Evaluation to give us additional staff aid in this process. The Director will be able to assist teachers in devising instruments to measure instructional effectiveness, and he will employ scientific means in achieving the above noted goals.

In the meantime, as later, we will continue to use follow-up studies, student evaluation, teacher critiques, advisory committee advice, and the available existing committees to conduct evaluations.

The Dean of Instruction and the Dean of Student Personnel supervise a constant process of curricular evaluation. In this they are aided by the entire staff. Recently Dean Donohue's office distributed a questionnaire to graduates prepared by Professor Jane Ait. This is attached as Appendix 6 and solicits information valuable in our curricula evaluation. A good example of program evaluation is the machinery and resultant data gathered in the assessment of the special program called SSDS (Semester for Self Directed Study). That information is included here as Appendix 7.

During the coming school year and in succeeding years the administration will be working with the Board curriculum and finance committees in periodic evaluations of existing as well as proposed curricula, programs, and even courses. We will have follow-up data, unit costs, enrollment figures, and all the information necessary for a full evaluation.

THE CURRENT AND FUTURE CURRICULUM

I have indicated that since 1970, we have attempted to build a curriculum which is keyed both to the needs of society at large and the desires of students. Now, as we prepare to enter our fourth year of operation, we have an extensive set of offerings in baccalaureate/college parallel curricula, 28 vocational curricula, a developmental or remedial program, and we share in the most ambitious and noteworthy continuing education program in the State of Illinois. In addition we have a competent professional staff of 12 full-time counselors (student development faculty), to advise and counsel students. A breakdown of the curriculum as a whole is as follows:

I. Baccalaureate Curricula

Liberal Arts
General Science
General Business
Pre-Engineering

Offerings in:

Anthropology
Art
Biology
Business
Chemistry
Communications
Earth Science
Economics
Engineering
Environmental Science
French
Geography
German
History
Journalism
Mathematics
Music
Natural Science

Philosophy
Physical Education
Physics
Political Science
Psychology
Social Science
Sociology
Spanish
Theater

II. Vocational Curricula

Accounting
Agriculture Marketing-Commodity Futures
Architectural Technology
Automotive Technology
Chemical Technology
Child Care Services
Data Processing
Electronics Technology
Fire Science Technology
Industrial Management and Supervision
Machine Technology
Marketing/Mid-Management
Medical Laboratory Technology
Medical Records Technology
Medical Transcriptionist
Physical Therapist Assistant
Practical Nursing
Radiologic Technology
Secretarial Science

III. General Studies

Offerings in:

Communication
Reading
Mathematics
Psychology

In order to graduate from Oakton with an A.A. or A.A.S. degree, all students must complete at least six hours each in the areas of communications, social science, and science (including mathematics). In addition all students must complete one

interdisciplinary course from an approved list. This is called the general education requirement and is mandated by state guidelines. (Standards and Criteria for the Evaluation and Recognition of Illinois Public Junior Colleges, Revised 1970, Page 26) This core requirement is designed "to contribute to the liberal education of each student." (Ibid.)

It is our feeling that during the next several years curriculum development will be limited somewhat by the nationwide drop-off of college enrollments and our own space problems. In the baccalaureate area we will probably develop no new curricula. Special interest programs for students, however, will be implemented from time to time and we can expect to see more offerings like the Green Turnip and Focus Chicago. An Election '74 program is now under development. We will naturally add courses (extensions of existing curricula) from time to time, and we may well choose to add some new disciplines (e.g., astronomy). The thrust in curriculum development during the next five years will be in the area of career education. Appendix 8 lists potential curricula planned by year. Those which are marked with an asterisk are the ones most likely to implement, but we are developing plans, conducting surveys, and assessing the job market in each area.

It should be clearly stated and noted that curriculum development is a process that goes on continuously. Practically all segments of the college have a role in this process. This paper has been one effort to explain and annotate the process. We expect to make periodic reports such as this in order to keep the Board and the public up to date on our efforts.

APPENDIX 1

Flow Chart

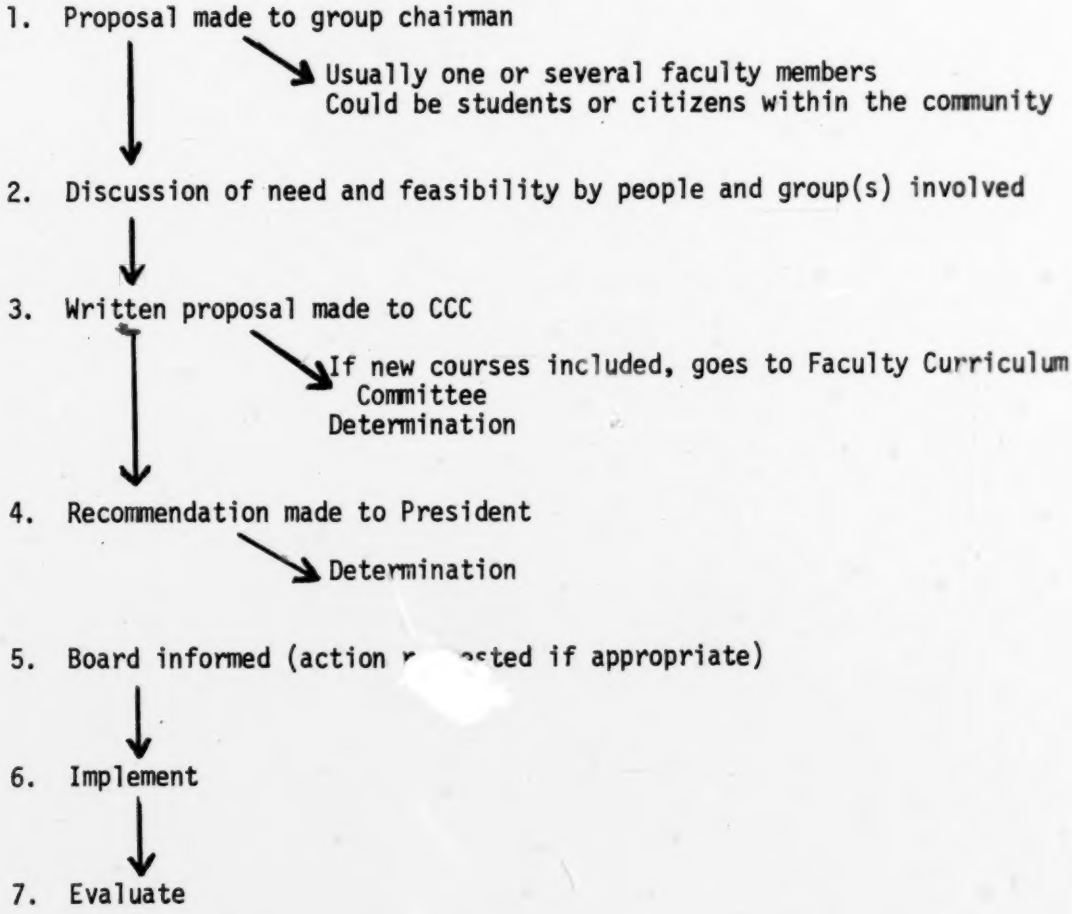
How a New Curriculum is Created

1. Establish need
   - General Advisory Committee advice
   - Charge-backs
   - Community Survey
   - Faculty, students, business, industry
2. a. Submit proper form to state (IJCB) (proposal to "consider")
   b. Discuss with Board Curriculum Committee
3. Clear internally
   - College Coordinating Council
   - President's Cabinet
   - President's directive
4. Present to Board for action
5. Submit approval forms to IJCB
   Other state agencies as required (D.V.T.E., etc.)
6. IJCB sends to Board of Higher Education
7. State approval and funding OK'd
8. Board informed
9. Recruit faculty and students as needed; publicize
10. Implement
11. Evaluate

APPENDIX 2

Flow Chart

How a New Program of Instruction is Created


1. Proposal made to group chairman
Usually one or several faculty members
Could be students or citizens within the community
2. Discussion of need and feasibility by people and group(s) involved
3. Written proposal made to CCC
If new courses included, goes to Faculty Curriculum Committee
Determination
4. Recommendation made to President
Determination
5. Board informed (action requested if appropriate)
6. Implement
7. Evaluate

APPENDIX 3

Flow Chart

How a New Course is Created

1. Proposal

   To: Group Chairman
   Dean
   CCC
   Faculty Curriculum Committee

   By: Anyone

2. To Faculty Curriculum Committee

   Factors: Need
   Curriculum it supplements
   Cost
   Space
   Transfer (If relevant)

   If disapproved - back to originator
   If approved

3. College Coordinating Council

   If disapproved - give reasons to Faculty Committee
   If approved

4. President's Cabinet

   President decides
   If approved

5. a. If transfer course, letters ent to four year schools for ruling on transfer (typically UI, UICC, Northern, Northeastern)

   b. If career, Curricular Advisory Committee consulted (This may be done anywhere after Step #1.)

6. Approval form (#15) sent to IJCB staff

   If disapproved, no state money
   If approved

7. Course scheduled in appropriate semester; students enrolled

8. Evaluate

APPENDIX 4

GENERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Committee to advise the administration in the development of the overall vocational and technical curriculum.

The purpose of these committees is:

1. Advisory - not policy making

2. Valuable in helping to determine overall objectives, policies and emphasis of vocational-technical education at Oakton Community College.

3. Useful in receiving information relating to Manpower Trends and job opportunities, new and emerging occupations.

4. Helpful in interpreting vocational-technical education to the community.

5. Beneficial in student recruitment activities.

6. Of assistance in long range planning activities relating to curriculum design, staffing, facilities and equipment.

The constituency is viewed as being:

1. Representation from business/industry in each of the following areas:

   a. Applied Biological and Agriculture Occupations
   b. Business, Marketing and Management
   c. Health Occupations
   d. Industrial Oriented
   e. Personal and Public Services

2. Representation from area high school districts or individuals knowledgeable regarding vocational education as it exists on the secondary level in this community college district.

3. Representation from senior universities who can help to direct articulation between these two educational levels.

4. Other persons deemed valuable in giving assistance.

APPENDIX 5

CURRICULAR ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The function of the curricular advisory committee is to advise junior college administrators regarding instructional programs in specific trades, crafts, or occupations. This committee should be concerned with the particular occupational education area which it represents as it relates to the overall educational program. Some specific functions are that it:

1. Serves as a communication channel between college and community occupational groups.

2. Lists the specific skills and suggests related and technical information for the course.

3. Recommends competent personnel from business and industry as possible instructors.

4. Helps evaluate the program of instruction.

5. Suggests ways for improving the public relations program at the junior college.

6. Assists in recruiting, providing internships, and in placing qualified graduates in appropriate jobs.

7. Keeps the college informed on changes in labor market, specific needs, and surpluses, etc.

8. Provides means for the college to inform the community of occupational programs.

9. Assesses program needs in terms of the entire community.

Oakton has a curricular advisory committee for each of its vocational curricula. The Assistant Dean of Instruction for Vocational Programs and the Faculty Coordinator direct the activities of the committees.

APPENDIX 6

Name_____

Address_____

I. Are you enrolled in another school at the present time?
Yes_____ No_____

If the answer to this question is no, please indicate what you are doing currently and return this in the enclosed envelope.

_____

_____

II. Information about your present college

1. Name of institution_____
2. Location_____
3. Check one - attending full-time_____attending part-time_____
4. Your major_____
5. Your GPA on a 4.0 scale_____
6. Check one - mid term_____quarter_____semester or trimester_____

III. Transfer of Oakton credits

1. How many hours of credit did the college allow you for work taken at Oakton?_____sem. hrs. _____ or qtr. hrs._____
2. Name of Oakton courses that were not acceptable_____

_____

What reason was given to you for the denial of c dit?_____

_____

_____

_____

IV. Adjustment to your new school

Please rate your experiences thus far in the following respects (whichever are applicable to you)

IV. Adjustment to your new school (Contd)

a) maintain academic achievement: feel adequately prepared_____

feel somewhat prepared_____feel unprepared_ _____

b) obtaining counseling services: accessible_____average_____

assistance difficult to obtain_____

c) estimating cost of attending present school: underestimated_____

estimated accurately_____overestimated_ _____

d) academic advisement: adequate_____inadequate_____

e) orientation to the school:· no problems_____a few problems at

first_____no orientation provided_____

f) finding part time work: significant problem_____average

problem_____no problem_____

g) locating housing: significant problem_____average problem

_____no problem_____

V. Evaluation of Oakton

1. Name of one Oakton course which was most helpful to you

_____

2. Name of one course which was least helpful to you_____

_____

3. Check the curriculum in which you were enrolled at Oakton

Lib. Arts___Gen. Bus.___Gen. Sci.___Pre. Eng.___Acct._____

Arch. Tech.___Chem. Tech.___Child Care___Data Proc._____

Fire Sci.___Indus. Mgt.___Mgt. & Mid Mgt.___Med. Tech_____

Med. Records___Med. Trans.___Office Skills___Phy. Ther._____

Prac. Nursing_____Rad. Tech___.

4. Please evaluate the following aspects of your Oakton experiences.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
A) Faculty	_____	____	____	____	_____
B) Faculty-Staff availability	_____	____	____	____	_____
C) Counseling	_____	____	____	____	_____
D) Courses	_____	____	____	____	_____
E) Student Activities	_____	____	____	____	_____

5. Make any additional comments you wish that would be helpful in identifying areas for improvement or change.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Would you be willing to have Oakton students know your name in case they have questions about the school you now attend?

Yes_____NO_____

7/18/72

APPENDIX 7

THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

TO EVALUATE THE SEMESTER FOR SELF-DIRECTED STUDY

The Sub-Committee on Student Response: Toni Rowitz
James Stewart
Harvey Irlen

Section I

Introduction

The sub-committee's charge was to determine how participating students responded to their experiences in the Semester for Self-Directed Study, to solicit any suggestions they might have for change, and to determine, incidentally, if their responses in person correlated with their responses on the written evaluations turned in at the end of the semester. The sub-committee was able to interview a total of ten students at three separate sessions. The remaining students in SSDS were unable to attend any interview sessions. Discussion was initiated with a list (attached) of quite broad questions which served to provide a general, though by no means binding, framework for the students' responses.

Section II

General Impressions (Student)

It should be stated at the outset that the student responses seemed substantially to confirm the written evaluations they had submitted at the end of spring semester. The students we talked to were unanimously positive about the Semester for Self-Directed Study, but they were each aware of other student participants whose final reactions were not positive. It is worth noting that those latter students were unable to attend interview sessions.

The students felt they had achieved very satisfactory relationships with the participating faculty members and with each other. They made it clear that they considered these relationships valuable, and that they felt that such relationships might have been more difficult, perhaps impossible, to attain in a regular classroom situation.

The students were equally pleased with their own personal growth during the Semester for Self-Directed Study. They indicated that they had learned how to rely upon themselves and when to rely upon others; but by and large, personal growth seems to have excluded any kind of community growth. That is, the students being interviewed had a good deal to say about themselves, but very little, even when pressed, to say about the community of students and teachers in the Semester for Self-Directed Study.

Academically, the students interviewed all seemed to have done well. They felt that they had learned subject matter much more effectively than in a traditional classroom, and that what they had learned was of permanent value to them. They were pleased to have discovered that learning was valid, and that literature, sociology, political science, and psychology have distinct contemporary interest. This success is at least partly due to the factors suggested in the two paragraphs immediately above. Thus the students were convinced that after their experience in the Semester for Self-Directed Study, they would be able to operate much more freely, independently, and effectively in regular classroom situations.

Section III

Modifications and Suggestions (Student)

As the foregoing section might suggest, the students were most interested in improving the academic benefits of the program. To this end they suggested

that there be increased course options, released time for instructors, more structure to the program to afford more communication among participating students with regard to ongoing projects and papers, and the opportunity to take additional semesters of SSDS. The students indicated some confusion as to the relation between the larger group of students and teachers and the academic thrust of the program, and some of them wondered openly if there was too much emphasis on community, with minimal effect, and too little emphasis on learning. These students seemed to suggest that the learning they did was on their own, almost in spite of the larger group.

The recommendations below will indicate that none of this is to be construed negatively. The students' unvoiced suggestions, as filtered through the members of the sub-committee, seem to have been that the Semester for Self-Directed Study must assess and implement its objectives more realistically than it has.

Section IV

Recommendations and Summary (Sub-Committee)

In general, the individual members of the sub-committee could not help but feel that these were motivated students who might very well have succeeded in any program. If they were representative, it may have been that the Semester for Self-Directed Study tended to select such students. But the number of "X" grades suggests that initial motivation needs to be continually reinforced in terms of specific activities. An experience as potentially rewarding as self-directed study should not be intended only for bright students.

On the basis of student interviews and evaluations, and our own perceptions of the Semester for Self-Directed Study, the sub-committee makes the following recommendations:

A. The program should offer increased course options, including Psychology 105 and 106.

Students asked if there were some way to increase the number of instructors loosely affiliated with a semester for self-directed study, yet maintain the small number of instructors who were very specifically affiliated with the program. The advantage to this in their eyes would be significantly to broaden the range of course possibilities. One method of obtaining this goal would be for the SSDS faculty to act as advisers to the students, and to solicit independent-study options for the students from the faculty at large. Any faculty member willing to do so might agree to take on, say, three students for independent-study projects in one or more of the courses he was teaching that particular semester. His role would be to consult with the student and his SSDS adviser on matters purely academic, but not to participate in any of the community activities that the program might provide.

We have suggested the inclusion of Psychology 105 or Psychology 106 in the SSDS offerings in order to allow the student who finds the program too difficult to have at least one positive experience in it. The students interviewed were unanimous in feeling that, if nothing else, the program provided opportunities for personal growth that did not occur in the traditional classroom. Ideally, it should be possible to give the student who wanted it academic credit for this growth--especially in view of the fact that we offer a course entitled "The Psychology of Personal Growth."

B. The Semester for Self-Directed Study should offer a second-semester option to students who desire it.

Students who succeeded in the program felt very strongly that they would like to have the opportunity to repeat their success in a different course construct. They would like to be able to take SSDS a second time. We feel

that this option should be available to the student, for it would enable him to plan more elaborate projects or studies than a single semester would allow. Obviously, to enter a second semester of SSDS, a student's first-semester objectives would have to have been met successfully.

C. Students should be made aware in advance of the anticipated form and content of SSDS group meetings.

The students interviewed indicated a distinct lack of commitment to the SSDS community as a whole. They felt the community was a good idea in theory, but in practice it seemed to waste a lot of their time. They would have appreciated the opportunity of knowing in advance what specific meetings were going to concern themselves with, so that the individual student could exercise one more independent option and decide not to come. We feel that commitment to the community is better than a lack of commitment, but we submit that one cannot be committed to something that is thoroughly nebulous or spontaneous to the point of non-existence.

D. An important aspect of the program should be the sharing of student academic work with the entire SSDS community.

Students who were working successfully and completing their objectives felt somehow cheated at not being able to share their progress and to share the progress of other students at meetings of the entire group. They were apparently under the impression that this would be done, but it wasn't. They felt that because the program was valid academically, the learning that was going on among the individual participants should have been emphasized more.

E. There should be extensive pre-semester counseling; student contracts should be finalized within the first three to four weeks of the semester.

Students said repeatedly that they and their fellow students succeeded

when they knew what they were doing and knew it early. They recommended that all students admitted to the program have some idea of what they were going to undertake, and that contracts be settled early enough for the student to have sufficient time to complete his objectives, even if modification is necessary.

The sub-committee supports the above student recommendations, being fully aware that they might possibly lead to a situation where SSDS students were somehow "elite." Such a situation is, in our view, most undesirable, and if it occurs would indicate a signal failure on the part of the Semester for Self-Directed Study. Nonetheless, we feel that there is a difference between the exceptional student and the student who simply has an idea of where he wants to go. If there is such a difference, then the latter student can succeed in a semester for self-directed study. If no such difference exists, then there is probably no need for a program of the magnitude and ambition of this one.

F. Faculty members participating directly in the Semester for Self-Directed Study should be granted one course released time for the semester(s) they are participating.

This recommendation has been arrived at independently by both students and colleagues of the participating SSDS faculty members. The amount of time theoretically required by the program is sufficient to warrant released time in terms of academic advising and multiple course preparation. The sub-committee feels, however, as recommended in "A" above, that the course preparation could be spread more equitably among the faculty at large, and the advising function should be significantly augmented.

These recommendations are meant to emphasize and reinforce the basically positive responses the sub-committee obtained from the students it interviewed. The students feel--and we feel--that the program is a good one, and that it

should be strengthened, supplemented, and made a continuing part of Oakton's curriculum. This report is submitted in the belief that all this is both possible and desirable.

H1/ad
7/18/72

APPENDIX 8

5-YEAR PLAN - VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL EDUCATION

1973-74 Programs:

Automotive Technology (Apprenticeship)
Machine Technology (Apprenticeship)
Agriculture Marketing-Commodity Futures
Electronics Technology

1974-75 Programs:

Banking & Finance
*Insurance
*Hotel-Motel Management
*Nuclear Medicine
*Histology
Registered Nursing
*Office Machine Repair
*Radio-TV Repair
Mechanical Technology

1975-76 Programs:

*Real Estate
*Transportation-Warehousing
*Medical Office Assistant
*Bio-Medical Electronic Technologist
Graphic Arts
Environmental Control
Food Service Preparation
Recreational Leadership

1976-77 Programs:

*Electro Mechanical Technologist
*Power Mechanics Technologist
*Fashion Retailing
*Legal Secretary

1977-78 Programs:

Supermarket Management
Book Store Management
*Mental Health Technician
*Welding
*Nuclear Engineering
*Fluid Power Engineering Technologist
*Appliance Repair

1982-83 Programs:

Merchandising
Printing Sales
Travel Service
Micro-Precision Instrumentation
Baker

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

AUG 29 1973

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGE
INFORMATION